



SANJAY PERERA 2016-08-21

## THE ECONOMIC UNCONSCIOUS

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Woman, eternally, /shows us the way. — *Faust*, Goethe

Supposing truth is a woman — what then? — *Beyond good and evil*, Nietzsche

### A. Introduction

It may still seem novel to some that what they have been taught in school and what has been venerated as an academic field is but a doctrine for waging war, conquest and spreading inhumanity while trying to regulate the normalcy of the work day. Do we even need Marx to tell us that the productivity demanded of slaves from the days of pharaoh is the kernel of neoclassical economics? The only qualification needed for a license in slave driving is to grasp that you must do your utmost to prevent others from leisure time and promote a 24-hour work day as the means of staying alive. All surplus production belongs to the slave masters. Freedom is for the '1 per cent.' This is economic reality and the essence of economic rationality (ER).

This essay is a follow-up to "A theory of economic violence" and pushes further the enterprise of trying to understand properly where we are at in order to let go of the corrupted old paradigm we are trapped within, and move towards the new one of a moral economy. Georges Bataille's idea of heterology is looked at in more detail to see how it works beyond the constraints of ER for an insight into the non-rational thereby allowing us to move beyond the conformity of homogeneity into the creative and liberating realm of articulating a just and fair system through heterogeneity.[1]

It is heterogeneity that allows for the linking of what superficially seems disparate but connected on a deeper level; this is the complex connection between things-ideas that helps posit a theoretical framing in understanding the world, particularly its socio-economic aspects — as it really is. Here, the ideas of François Laruelle are relevant as his notion of non-philosophy (NP) and its opening of a generically scientific space of theorizing provide a contemporary framework for how heterology operates. But Laruelle is not the focus though he is subject to discussion. Instead, we look more at some of Sigmund Freud's ideas to see how they dovetail with the energetic connections of the socio-economic circuitry opened to us by heterology.

Hopefully, we will see that the current/flow of economic energy is the basis for an economic unconscious which in turn underlies

our society as it underwrites our psyches; naturally, this then shapes many aspects of our life. It is a cycle in which we co-create our socio-economic realities with others. The idea is, of course, speculative like much else discussed here. In any case, this is but an exercise to try and bring into further relief the violence of economics: this is attempted by looking at, for a start, Bataille's important piece on "The use value of D.A.F. Sade."

## B. Bataille's heterology

The idea of waste, expenditure and energy flow is anchored by Bataille's heterology and applied effectively in his essay "The notion of expenditure" and his great work, *The accursed share*. However, the idea of heterology is properly introduced by Bataille in "Sade" when he broadly shows the connection between consumption and excretion that seems to be espoused by the notorious Marquis. But the sensationalization of Sade's life and writings belies the rejection of much they purportedly stand for. Yet Bataille is claiming we should put aside prejudice and an understandable tendency to abhor some of what appears in Sade's work, for there is a value in examining the connections between things the latter's writing implies.

### i. Heterology in "The use value of D.A.F. Sade (An open letter to my comrades)"

In this unique essay, Bataille states he wants to: "...introduce the values established by the Marquis de Sade, obviously not in the domain of gratuitous impertinence, but rather directly in the very market in which, each day, the credit that individuals and even communities can give to their own lives is...registered" (Bataille "Sade" 94). This is a *mise-en-scène* for understanding that Sade's ideas operate in our lives daily and thrive within the 'market forces' so many subscribe to. And with that Bataille launches into a discussion of the connection between the sacred and the profane; he then gets to his main point: appropriation and excretion are cornerstones of economic thinking but are not usually seen that way (Bataille "Sade" 94-96).

What Bataille does in his enterprise of economic thought is to render heterology as generically scientific; this does not mean that Bataille is defending scientific-economic rationality for that is what he is writing against (Bataille "Sade" 97); and in this he has predated Laruelle's claims that his NP is generically scientific (that which is *underdetermined* by science, indeterminate or a philosophic variable). This provides an opening into quantum thinking in a manner contra to the confinement of rationality (please see "A theory of economic violence"). Both of them also see the excess rationality in philosophical discourse as representative of the homogeneous which also undermines the enterprise of philosophy: in this the western analytic tradition has much to answer for.[2]

Bataille states that (his italics),

...any philosophical homogeneous representation of the world...[or] any philosophical system...is always a deprivation of our universe's sources of excitation and the [promotion in] development of a servile human species, fit only for the fabrication, rational consumption, and conservation of products...

*In that way [heterology] leads to the complete reversal of the philosophical process, which ceases to be the instrument of appropriation, and now serves excretion; it introduces the demand for the violent gratifications implied by social life* (Bataille "Sade" 97).[3]

What Bataille is trying to say here, and the page that follows those lines, is that heterology which shows the connection of different and at times seemingly opposing aspects of a process, is actually the representation of the polarity/duality of life and existence in general. That homogeneity in thought facilitates ER wherein people are but consumers and not much else; but this is not reflective of the vast range of possibilities of existence itself. Rationality produces imbalance in trying to theoretically purify thinking into logical categories that form boxes for empirical verification to fit neatly in – this is then the be all and end all of 'Reality.' This, to Bataille (and anyone else who is still honest about anything), is false and ludicrous. The seemingly disparate aspects of appropriation and excretion (accumulating surplus and expenditure, etc.) are not some dialectical process but an attempt to look at particular instances of the world through a framing device, and is a way of justifying his ideas (hence, the subtitle of the essay – "An open letter to my comrades.")

Bataille next tells us that he is concerned with *practical* heterology, and so: "Excretion is not simply a middle term between two appropriations" (Bataille "Sade" 99). That appropriation is meant to lead to the end itself of expenditure (excretion). Appropriation and expenditure do not have an instrumental relationship. To obviate this and merely discuss matters in terms of social conformity or palatability – is also an attempt at logical consistency (or rationalistic theorizing); this then deflects from the proper examination of human life in its richness and complexity. On the same page he states that the human viewpoint involves "the analysis of dreams" which is reflective of "appropriation as a means of excretion." So our dream states are not only working out aspects of the daily grind, but are also important expressions of our existence.

From here we begin to see better why Freud is relevant to Bataille and heterology. For we learn that:

...it is clear that a worker works in order to obtain the violent pleasures of coitus (in other words, he accumulates in order to spend). On the other hand, the conception according to which the worker must have coitus in order to provide for the future necessities of work is linked to the unconscious identification of the worker with the slave...

appropriation in its most overwhelming form historically devolves on slaves (Bataille "Sade" 99).

What this passage is saying, including the lines that follow it, is that the Marxian idea of social reproduction by the proletariat that creates the surplus that allows for exploitation by the capitalist masters (and which must include the minimum that sustains the working class as well) is conflated into the metaphor of coitus (which marries the concept of energetic expenditure of production and sex). And that appropriating (accumulating) for excretion for *both* masters and slaves *doubly* falls on the shoulders of the exploited (and, as usual, in favour of the elites). The expenditure of this surplus is also a direct expression of libidinal energy and a form of gratification for the elites, the issue is whether they are aware of the unconscious drives motivating them. This helps explain why profit and war mongers, and politicians in service to them, are besotted with a service-to-self ideology and a power-over-others mentality as there are libidinal undercurrents to this.

In the final pages of his essay, Bataille goes on to explain why he sees revolutionary movements as a form of overpowering and expelling those who hold the reigns of exploitation and power: the oppressors are excreted, kept at distance and sometimes executed. But this is a mirroring of what the oppressors do to those seen as subaltern or those deemed revolutionaries – the latter are only repeating the process imposed on them by their exploiters in the first place: (ironically, a refrain of bullies who end up being taught the lesson that the unjust do get a comeuppance at times is – "But this is class warfare..." – also known as stating-the-obvious).

## ii. Heterology in "The psychological structure of fascism"

In a sequel to the formal introduction of the idea of his heterology in "Sade," Bataille elaborates on homogeneity to add clarity to the former. "Fascism" is a complex piece with many facets. We are told that homogeneity promotes conformism and in the economic sphere it does this by insisting on productivity. Everything under homogeneity is instrumental and humans and their activities are never a good in themselves. The utilitarian principle of neoclassical economic rationalist dogma supporting capitalism underlies the homogeneous, where everything is given a uniformity which primarily varies via quantification represented through monetary value.

So Bataille states (his italics):

The common denominator, the foundation of social *homogeneity* and of the activity arising from it, is money [which]...serves to measure all work and makes man a function of measurable products. According to the judgment of *homogeneous* society, each man is worth what he produces; in other words, he stops being an existence *for itself*: he is no more than a function, arranged within measurable limits, of collective production (which makes him an existence *for something other than itself*) (Bataille "Fascism" 138).

Money is the medium *par excellence* of not parity in exchange but for engendering homogeneity in crushing the human spirit and society into the lowest common denominator of servitude to the capitalist class. This would operate within the logic of capital and the bureaucratic-functionary reasoning of neoclassical economics. The heterogeneous works against conformity in that it tends to lead to that which is "valid in itself" (Bataille "Fascism" 139) and starts to veer away from 'everything-tasting-like-genetically-modified-chicken' and ER (economic rationality).

Bataille elaborates on his point about rationality which would apply to ER (his italics) – "the object of science is to establish the *homogeneity* of phenomena...Thus, the *heterogeneous* elements excluded from the latter are excluded as well from the field of scientific considerations" (Bataille "Fascism" 141). So rationality is the common denominator of science that allows for the connection between hypotheses, observation and verification. However, this then keeps out elements that defy rationalist consistency in order to impose a template of homogeneity that is supposed to justify theoretical validity. But quantum thinking (as also espoused by Laruelle) does allow for heterogeneity and positing of ideas that stretch the boundaries of rationality, and in particular ER, via the active use of the imagination (quantum physics being an example), and this is its link to heterology as we use it (an extension and development from Bataille's notion). It is an effective deployment of the non-rational.

In an important transition, Bataille moves to Freudian thought again which he touched on in connection to heterology in "Sade." And so we move to the unconscious and we learn (Bataille's italics):

The exclusion of the *heterogeneous* elements from the *homogeneous* realm of consciousness formally recalls the exclusion of the elements, described (by psychoanalysis) as *unconscious*, which censorship excludes from the conscious ego. The difficulties opposing the revelation of *unconscious* forms of existence are of the same order as those opposing the knowledge of *heterogeneous* forms...it would seem that the *unconscious* must be considered as one of the aspects of the *heterogeneous* (Bataille "Fascism" 141).

What Bataille is pointing out is that rationality qua homogeneity keeps out the heterogeneous which is concomitant to the non-rational as exemplified by the unconscious. This is, thus, an attempt to assimilate only that which allows for conformity (homogeneity) and establish straitjacketed thinking. In turn, this simplifies and deadens thought patterns through providing the easiest explanation for all that is complex in the world and existence. Or, that which has all the profundity of a sound bite from a

Tea Party politician.

In any case, it is important to note Bataille's link of his ideas to Freudian thought when he stresses the attempt at expelling, repression or censorship of heterogeneous (or seemingly unacceptable) thoughts-ideas by the conscious mind via keeping them ensconced within the unconscious. The unconscious, of course, opens everything up into the rich and controversial field of psychoanalysis proper in all its glory.

For the rest of the essay, Bataille expounds on a complex connection between heterogeneity and homogeneity and how though interrelated they reflect a polarity in which each can give way to the other. While the idea of polarity is important and will be looked at further, we are not concerned with Bataille's view of how this works in conjunction with fascism *per se*; rather, we are interested in the opening they provide to examining the idea of energy flow in the socio-economic framework of the world and its effects on us. But it is clear where he is coming from for (his italics): "the thrust of these resolutions will have been consistent with the general direction of the existing *homogeneity*, namely, with the interests of the capitalists" (Bataille "Fascism" 156). The bottom-line for Bataille is that society reflects the homogeneous impact of Capital in maintaining a most unlevel playing field as possible.

### C. A first look at the economy and the unconscious

So how does Freud fit into this? As we are affected by the world, we too affect it. The inner workings of the psyche and drives of each person cannot but be affected by socio-economic forces, and vice-versa. The problem of rationality (ER in particular) is that it takes people away from the reality of the direct influence of individual and collective interaction with the world and splats it across charts and tables and economic concepts: most of which are devoid of human, non-human or environmental relevance. Indeed, the resulting injustice from a misdistribution of an (amoral-immoral) accumulation of resources and wealth is an undeniable result/constant of much economic theorizing.

Moreover, the utilitarian and instrumental characteristics of economics and finance tend to further complicate matters by enhancing a downward spiral for human drives and the psyche. The unconscious is not only impacted by long term slave driving work routines and constant worry over money; its influence in turn seeps into how we shape the spheres of labour, management, finance and all other aspects of our lives. In any case, it must be noted that in Freud the term 'economic' expresses connections between disparate elements as well as a flow of relationships between mental and emotional energy. So it can be said that heterology is also at the centre of Freud's thought. For the strength of his ideas lie not just in their richness and creativity, but in their inherent links between the inner and outer worlds (often reflective of one another) of human life and how psychical notions are connected to acting things out in ways that have direct physical impact.

Above all, Freud is linked to Bataille and the rise of quantum science in the first part of the last century through the focus on energy as the driving force of existence, for we are all forms and expressions of energy.

As Spivak says: "Economy is a metaphor of energy;"[4] it is also an engagement within energetic polarity of various elements which gives rise to their apparent irreconcilability. This is, however, illusory: for we state – they can and need to be harmonized. We hear from Derrida in response to Rousseau about "setting aside the resemblance with the Hobbesian theory of a natural war that imagination and reason would merely organize into a sort of economy of aggressivity" (Derrida 188). Here seemingly disparate elements of the imagination and reason-rationality are linked through an energetic range of the mental, emotional and physical: for instance, one does need to be psyched into spiraling downwards in emotional and mental frequencies to engage in the brutality of war.

We next hear from Derrida in continuing his dialogue with Rousseau that the "economy of pity and of morality must always let itself be contained within the limits of the love of self, all the more because it alone can illuminate the good of others for us" (Derrida 190). Again this is in reference to energy flow and connections and serves to link us to what is to follow in terms of the economy of goods and services and the mental and emotional. Indeed, Freud does say that regarding mental phenomena (his italics), "we take the *economic* standpoint, one from which we try to follow out the fate of given volumes of excitation and to achieve some assessment of it" which forms part of what he calls "a *meta-psychological* presentation" (Freud "Unconscious" 434b).[5] This aspect of flow and excitation in terms of what is generated through the relationship of phenomena we link in this essay to the economic flow of commodities and finance.

The unconscious of our society, as an extension of Freud and then some, is shaping and is being shaped by the channeling of our mental and emotional drives and energy within the socio-economic circuitry of society. This is enhanced by excitation received via the senses and their accompanying psychosomatic effects. In fact, to rely on ER and neoclassical economics is to indulge in a misdirection of our energy as individuals and collectively, as a society, into areas which may be productive regarding money churning activities – but devoid in many instances of genuine value or any ethical import. As a summation of some of the ideas to come: it is this lack of moral value in the economic unconscious of the individual and society that is an underlying cause for the way the world is today with its crises, unemployment, injurious calls for austerity and environmental destruction.

### iii. "Thoughts for the times on war and death"

In this essay from the early phase of World War I (WWI), Freud makes pertinent observations that we have finally come to

associate with the psychopathic conduct of corporations and capitalism as revealed in some books and documentaries in our time. Naturally, the issues are much broader and include our economic activities in general which then subsume the pathological nature of corporations and the finance industry. In talking about the effects of WWI in its early months, Freud points out: that the anguish and thoughts on death and disillusionment that come with conflict are unavoidable traits of our existence (as they occur in peacetime too).

Freud further points out that in referring to disillusionment he is not being sentimental for “one may perceive the biological and psychological necessity of suffering in the economics of human life, and yet condemn war both in its means and in its aims, and devoutly look forward to the cessation of all wars” (Freud “War and death” 755a-b). We need to note the reference to the necessity of suffering in the socio-economic relations of people as a natural condition of life. This also supports our claim that the economic framework we use today must look at the human cost and suffering its ideas entail. We cannot pretend to deal with socio-economic concepts in a vacuum; thinking that their validity is only established via proof as in measuring the movement of a body dropped from a high building; in doing so economics makes the incorrect assumptions about life predicated on the empty ontology of mathematics: we should instead focus on mental-emotional states of people as well, that is, the non-rational must be factored in.

Moreover, Freud crucially implies that daily suffering as a characteristic of human life as we know it *is not sufficient to rationalize any form, nor acceptance, of war, conflict or violence which is contra to what humans are capable of beyond the lower frequencies of their basic instincts*. The constant refrain of cynics, the self-interested and war-profit mongers is that people are unequivocally like them in the homogeneity of being solely creatures of their most basic impetus. Even Freud, in the thick of war and suffering, denies such assumptions and dogma.

This should also makes us aware that just as war is damaging to people and the world, the way business is conducted which is an aspect of economic forces — is akin to war. And this helps explain not only the inefficacy of much economic theory but that an effective way of understanding properly economics and business as is conducted for the most, is to have insight into war and conflict. Freud mentions that community standards (of the past in general) tend to have an ethical bias and they do not extol chicanery, as in “the practise of lying and deception in competition with...fellow-men” (Freud “War and death” 755b). But the state and that which is sanctioned and supported by it (like corporations *et al.*) make official all that individuals and communities which have a sense of ‘right’ and ‘wrong,’ decry. Freud accurately states that “the state has forbidden to the individual the practice of wrong-doing, not because it desired to abolish it, but because it desires to monopolize it” (Freud “War and death” 757a). It can also be seen as a manifesto of the corporate and banking world.

It is worth looking at length at what Freud describes as the hypocrisy of the social framework we have been bamboozled into accepting; for instance, in times of conflict it seems convenient that:

The warring state permits itself every such misdeed, every such act of violence, as would disgrace the individual man. It practises...also deliberate lying and deception against the enemy...The state exacts the utmost degree of obedience and sacrifice from its citizens, but at the same time treats them as children by maintaining an excess of secrecy, and a censorship of news and expressions of opinion...It absolves itself from the guarantees and contracts it had formed with other states, and makes unabashed confession of its rapacity and lust for power, which the private individual is then called upon to sanction in the name of patriotism (Freud “War and death” 757a-b).

These words may have a strong but chilling resonance with many these days. Generations have lived through and have an institutional memory of much war and devastation to life and the planet over the last century. We can only hope that more people have a better understanding of the evil, lies, and deceit that could not be hidden by Abu Ghraib or Guantanamo which also belie the normalcy presented to us by the (academic)-media-military-political-industrial complex. Recently, more light has been shone into areas of darkness revealing the systemic monitoring by governments of one another (not exactly for military secrets but prying into phone calls of political leaders perhaps for purposes of blackmail), and of its own citizens for questionable reasons; this only underscores the wastage of public funds that could have been spent on the welfare and good of people: for such revelations, we must thank people like Edward Snowden and others who have stood their ground and spoken their truth.

However, back to Freud who gives us another vital comment:

It cannot be a matter of astonishment...that this relaxation of all the moral ties between the greater units of mankind should have had a seducing influence on the morality of individuals; for our conscience is not the inflexible judge that ethical teachers are wont to declare it...When the community has no rebuke to make, there is an end of all suppression of the baser passions, and men perpetrate deeds of cruelty, fraud, treachery, and barbarity” (Freud “War and death” 757b).

What Freud is saying is that there is always an indelible link between the social forces as established by the state (and other socio-economic forces) and the individual. That despite the integrity people are capable of, it is naive to think that a person alone at every turn can withstand social indoctrination, the use of force, punishment and manipulation of fear unleashed on him when the community too goes with the misdirection of libidinal energy; the overall effect is concomitant with the perversion of morality in a person.[6] This reading may smooth over some theoretical complications in Freud in his view of morality and how ethics is

shaped in society (to him they are influenced by drives and the unconscious that is also shaped by libidinal intent)[7], but it is consistent with his claims that “those instincts which society condemns as evil...the selfish and the cruel – are [the]...primitive type” (Freud “War and death” 758a).

So what we (society) may regard and condemn as baser instincts in humanity are in themselves not ‘evil’ as such but have the nature of dense energetic vibrations that keep people at the lowest frequencies of their development. What we take for granted, but thinkers like Freud are at pains to point out: people are complex and have a duality which allows them to shift along an energetic pole of the libidinal current which attests to us being ‘good’ at the higher end of the frequency range and ‘bad’ at the lower one. In other words (italics Freud’s), a “human being is seldom altogether good or bad; he is usually *good* in one relation and *bad* in another, or *good* in certain external circumstances and in others decidedly *bad*” (Freud “War and death” 758a).

Unsurprisingly, Freud concludes that:

...our mortification and our grievous disillusionment regarding the uncivilized behaviour of our world-compatriots in this war [WWI] are shown to be unjustified. They were based on an illusion to which we had abandoned ourselves. In reality our fellow-citizens have not sunk so low as we feared, because they had never risen so high as we believed. That the greater units of humanity, the peoples and states, have mutually abrogated their moral restraints... to grant a passing satisfaction to the instincts [civilization] holds in check (Freud “War and death” 759b-760a).

This only goes to show that whatever fantasy economic theory proposes to sell us and policymakers, it cannot work around dealing with human essence and emotions. Not only does avoiding our impulses and feelings translate into an act of sheer ignorance, but denying the realities of human existence – a defining characteristic of ER and economic thinking – only exacerbates illusions while misdirecting human mental-emotional energies towards the lower end of the energetic pole as it forces an artificial focus on so-called ‘rationality,’ utility and self-interest which does not encourage us to look at the beauty of the stars above, nor wonder at our connection to the universe. Consistently, the operational modes of ER, corporations and financial industries gleefully mis-channel human energy into its lowest pit and pitch of resonance.

#### **iv. Beyond the pleasure principle**

Freud discusses early on in the essay the traumatic neuroses found in war and peace. He mentions briefly that underlying the neuroses are ‘fright,’ ‘fear’ and ‘anxiety.’ Freud immediately continues that “Anxiety” describes a particular state of expecting... danger or preparing for it” even if it is unknown; “Fear” requires a definite object of which to be afraid;” and “Fright”...is...the state a person gets into when he has run into danger without being prepared for it” (Freud *Pleasure* 11).

Is it surprising that in comparing the description of these aspects of mental states to the economic world of constant searching not just for employment but the ability to have a living wage and sustain oneself and our families, there is much resonance? Given our times of capitalist crises and enforced economic austerity wherein the rich and top corporate and banking executives continue to pay themselves what they ‘deserve,’ it is clearer that Capital in itself is a mode of power and a tool for sabotage and disruption (see Bichler and Nitzan – “Capital as power”). The current economic paradigm is the epitome of an energetic matrix created as a world of anxiety, fear and fright.

What better way to keep people in control than to wage war and to enforce economic hardship through financial debt, and sudden and sustained bouts of unemployment, while the elites hog the good life. For in that process of violence imposed on us sanctioned by much of academia, economists and their theories: a system of oppression working from the lowest vibrations of energetic duality holds full sway.[8] And we are caught up in it as we respond in like to hardship by throwing back the energy of resentment. This may seem speculative as Freud himself admits regarding his own ideas in some of his work but it rings true for an increasing number of us.

We are informed by Freud that consciousness is part of a broader mental apparatus that includes “perceptions of excitations coming from the external world,” and that its perceptual system shapes us and how we interact with the world (Freud *Pleasure* 26). This reinforces how the system we live under has direct impact on us; believing that it is a rational system that is somehow supposed to be a good in itself, and that this rationality sustained in various academic fields is subject to examinations and scholastic scrolls awarded: reveals this as an institutionalized feature of our time. What is worse is that it is all taken as sacrosanct because it is supposedly supported by ‘experts’ most of whom operate within the rationalist paradigm (*and earn their keep for doing so*).

Things get more interesting as Freud explains how “cathexes of energy” are part of the perceptual apparatus (perception-consciousness) in relation to dealing with excitations that can cause trauma (Freud *Pleasure* 34). He states that this energy flow, and its coalescence at certain points in the perceptual apparatus, has a direct result on our mental-emotional (and, of course, physical) health. And there is a need for an outlet for a “freely flowing cathexis that presses on towards discharge;” this is reminiscent of Bataille and the inevitability of the expenditure of energy in our lives and socio-economic processes (Freud *Pleasure* 35). In the expenditure of this energy, we constantly transform and affect not only our lives but the world.

#### **v. Civilization and its discontents**

In one of his most important works, Freud discusses how contemporary civilization itself may be the cause of much of our discomfort and unhappiness. Early on, he mentions a sense of being unbounded through an 'oceanic' feeling of limitlessness, oneness and 'eternity': usually associated with spiritual states. He says how what he terms "religious energy" is used (with the suggestion of exploitation) and channeled by religious bodies (Freud *Civilization* 11). Freud develops this idea of 'oneness' as that of an ego-feeling of maturity where "the ideational contents appropriate to it would be precisely those of limitlessness and of a bond with the universe" (Freud *Civilization* 15).

While Freud is not given to extolling the spiritual dimensions of experiences, he does say "that in mental life nothing which has once been formed can perish – that everything is somehow preserved" (Freud *Civilization* 16). He believes that things are deeply embedded in the psyche through layers and can be recalled under suitable circumstances. He goes on to add that he is (his italics) "asserting that what is past in mental life *may* be preserved and is not *necessarily* destroyed" (Freud *Civilization* 20). These words suggest a type of resilience to consciousness that seems at odds with the temporality and limitedness of a physical body subject to death.

A conclusion most may draw from this may include a resonance with the law of conservation of energy in that, in the Freudian instance, mental energy is ever present and the socio-economic relationships we find ourselves in are so many furrows for this energy to transform within as it ineluctably impinges the human and planetary organism. There is nothing rationalist in this but the creative application of the generically scientific to the social world, as well as an exercise in heterology. This should help us be open to possibilities that take us beyond the puerility and restricted nature of rationalist paradigms.

But things become even more interesting when Freud, discussing the influence of intoxicants, mentions that these are often used as a means to alleviate the difficulties of existence by some in their struggle for happiness such that for them intoxicants have an "established place in the economics of their libido" (Freud *Civilization* 28). This again refers to the energy circuit of human life and its needs and wants. And as Freud notices, this mis-channeling of energy via intoxicants can result in "the useless waste of a large quota of energy which might have been employed for the improvement of the human lot" (Freud *Civilization* 28). Bataille may have agreed with this.

Importantly, this highlights the fact that human energy can be channeled the right way to serve the highest interests of all including the planet itself. This would mean a proper husbanding of the higher end of our energy fields to take us more in the direction of doing the positive rather than staying at the lower end of sheer materialism, avarice and being perpetually insatiable (or living it up as consumers).

But as soon as Freud says this, he is on about how we can create our own reality though we are challenged in making a better world due to the way things and people are. He states: "one can try to re-create the world, to build up in its stead another world in which its most unbearable features are eliminated and replaced by others that are in conformity with one's own wishes" (Freud *Civilization* 31). However, what is preventing this according to Freud is the collective inclination of people not to allow a move towards betterment of the world other than what fits their peculiarities of what is best: but this still allows for the possibility that if there is *collective effort for betterment of our world, then it can be achieved* for it would be a proper channeling of our energies in the right way and direction.

It can be further gleaned from Freud's views that we must not confuse the apparent subjectivity of an individual's perception of happiness and what it means to do right with the ability for a society to collectively *will and act* on something, thereby making it happen. Freud says – "Happiness...is a problem of the economics of the individual's libido. There is no golden rule which applies to everyone...All kinds of different factors will operate to direct his choice. It is a question of how much real satisfaction he can expect to get from the external world...how much strength he feels he has for altering the world to suit his wishes" (Freud *Civilization* 34).

Again, we are confronted with the will and choice of changing things for the better. It must be noted that while a lot is placed on the shoulders of the individual, collective will towards change is vital: Freud's ideas vacillate between the bootless nature of individual effort which tries to go against 'reality'; and the possibility of change if collective energy is channeled correctly. So it is not surprising that he ends his essay with these lines:

The fateful question for the human species seems to me to be whether and to what extent their cultural development will succeed in mastering the disturbance of their communal life by the human instinct of aggression and self-destruction. It may be that in this respect precisely the present time deserves special interest. Men have gained control over the forces of nature to such an extent that with their help they would have no difficulty in exterminating one another to the last man. They know this, and hence comes a large part of their current unrest, their unhappiness and their mood of anxiety. And now it is expected that...eternal Eros, will make an effort to assert himself in the struggle with his equally immortal adversary. But who can foresee with what success and with what result? (Freud *Civilization* 111-112).[9]

Once more the polarity of human drives, which are characterized as Eros (love/desire) and the death instinct in his essay, is what produces tension in people as they struggle and/or choose to do what is right against the pull of the lower vibrations of destruction or negativity. Freud is not enough of a fatalist or determinist such that he — despite the advent of Nazism and its

stirring things up for the next world war — was given over to the triumph of the death instinct. He is torn between his seemingly pessimistic view (he would regard it as 'realistic') of humanity and the pull of the higher vibrations of what is 'good' symbolized by him as culture (or the finer aspects of 'civilization').

Freud is clear here that technological advancement and the attempt to control nature and the world, as opposed to working in *harmony* with it, are fundamental to human dissatisfaction: because the quest for control and power over others and the world only leads to armament build-up, warfare and devastation of life and the environment. It is interesting that the higher aspects of 'civilization' and culture are associated in those final lines with "communal life;" and he does imply that the state and its apparatus are crucial to those aspects of society that are repressive, and that communal living or values tend to reflect ethical thinking and acting in realizing the common interest of one and all. In this view of the state, Freud would have the empathy of those espousing Marxian or Anarchist thought.

It is important to note Freud stresses that the baser human instincts for aggression and dominance are not what leads to happiness, and that fulfillment of desire in relation to love (or vice versa) is what precipitates the positive and easeful in our psyches. So if we take Freud as a practitioner of his own idea of 'reality' it becomes apparent that the ability to strive, cultivate and maintain the higher energies of Eros, caring and compassion is well within the ambit of the human race. A better world is a possibility that can be actualized. This is certainly a powerful and relevant insight that psychoanalysis, whatever its faults, gives us.

#### D. What this all means

We are only presenting a sketch of what will be developed over time: that the ideas of Bataille and Freud are useful in going beyond the limited linearity of 3D (three- dimensional) thought, that is, the rationalist mode of thinking that underscores much economic thought. Yet, neither of them is free from the limitations of linearity though they push boundaries in venturing into extra-dimensional thought: Bataille with his notion of expenditure and energy in economic thinking, and Freud with his influential ideas of the psyche, unconscious, drives and polarity between Eros and the death instinct. Their thinking is an enriched 3D form of thought. However, what is crucial and what we need to examine in depth to push boundaries even further is how the energy of our psyche and life force is the determining template of our civilization.

By examining how human thought, emotions and actions shape our lives we take responsibility into our own hands at last rather than relegate it to some economic theoretician and his supporters. We do need alternative theories, of course, but they are meant to be empowering and place the burden and choices on us rather than intersecting lines, graphs or statistics. The energetic framework of economic thinking is not strange for it has grounding not only in the generically scientific (and more particularly quantum science) – but more importantly the quantum thinking underpinning it.

We have come to accept that aspects of quantum physics are verifiable and we tend to link that to visible achievements such as sending a rocket into space and, alas, nuclear weapons. But the splitting of the atom and the tremendous energy it unleashes should wake more of us up to the fact that *all is energy*, for that is the underlying principle of modern physics (tenets of which many cling to as gospel truths). We can capture energetic imprints of human brain activity and how that changes due to different excitations taking place; we understand better psycho-somatic illnesses and healing; we can actually photograph and analyze the human aura.

As always, we extol beliefs like — 'where there's a will, there's a way;' we still celebrate the human spirit over adversity and the possibilities that open up to us via courage and determination. Yet, we are unable to rise above 'economic forces' (and paradoxically, this leads us to privilege harmful dogmas like economics as being able to lead us out of difficulties); we seem perpetually stuck with poverty, war and the idea of 'scarcity.' Why is it that despite all the faith people place in themselves and others (apart from the unhealthy reliance on bankers and the politicians supporting them), we are unable to rise above the socio-economic-environmental debacle that besets us?

However, if the collective will and action of society can re-direct us into new paradigms, then what is holding us back? We often, unwittingly, play into the hands of harmful thinking generated by polarity-duality of energy and separation; the belief that has been inculcated that we are *essentially* different from one another (and we stick to that as if it can prevent sickness and death); that we cannot move forward unless we are *essentially* replicas of one another for only then can trust and support be given (this is a generalization, but identity with one particular group in this sense has been vicious in its effect rather than liberating to life on earth); the conviction has been drummed in that human society can only be defined by perpetual conflict, war, the need for security forces and maintenance of a military-industrial complex, and unending disease. Putting ignorance aside and the role played by the media in promoting the inane, sensational, false, and violent (thereby heightening the lower vibrations of human polarity) for a moment, let us ask a different question – in whose interest is it that the status quo be maintained, and a system of waste, expenditure and misdirection of human energy into that which encourages war, armament creation, constant surveillance, and promotion of poverty be ever present.

This is not an invitation to just point the finger at someone else.



But rather than state the (increasingly) obvious which to some may still only be an expression of polemics, let us also ask why is it that traditional theories from corporate academia (known as academia today), government think-tanks (a convenient invention), and the usual conflict between 'socialist' and 'capitalist' thinking still do not open a way forward. What if going back to older ideas that have subsided due to the rise of rationalism and the worshipping of our lower energies, but this time amalgamated with high-end quantum science, may be the imaginative and reasonable way forward?

What if rather than talk about scarcity, we talk about abundance and the re-channeling of energy (commodities and human thought and action are conglomerations of energy) in a just and fair way. But this is not as simple as it sounds. What if we try and start to moderate or set aside the lower vibrations of competition to survive, the need for revenge, expression of aggression and, instead, look at what is good in our own hearts and minds, and elevate that (challenging but not impossible) to *envisioning* what a world of abundance and compassion can be like. The co-creation by us of focused energy through our higher vibrations will surely yield something. We are already focused too much on politicking, scarcity, and anger at those who disagree with us: so why is it a surprise we have a world that reflects this?

One of the fascinating insights from quantum science is that matter behaves differently when *observed*. The presence of *consciousness* affects the outcome of quantum experiments (this is at the heart of quantum thinking). That consciousness, a form of energy, has a special impact on the world around us is a vital revelation of quantum science for it takes us out of the rationalistic and into the heterological and non-rational: this is a clarion reminder of how perception shapes reality, literally. We should pause and think carefully about what this implies. So, what would a heightened consciousness emanating from higher energetic frequencies perceive or be able to create? In other words, how aware are we that our consciousness has an impact on matter (which is regarded as condensed energy)?

We have been subjected to the constant cathexes on money and scarcity as part of our daily life. This in turn has produced a cathexis on survivability and fear. This in a nutshell is the world we live in. The excitation we are subject to through our senses which in turn impacts the psyche via various forms of media and the constant barrage of news feeds highlighting the bizarre, violent and fearful — is a good form of programming that lowers our energetic frequencies. Who has time or the inclination to be regularly inspired? On the other hand, the focus on celebrity gossip and so-called 'important' figures also has a dampening effect in that it can lower self-esteem and make many think that they are never good enough as those, coincidentally, highlighted by the media as being *news worthy*. Perhaps this is also why some still think people power is unneeded when so many have been indoctrinated into believing that only *someone else* can 'save' us – as in those anointed as 'important' by the media, 'experts' or those in positions of 'authority'.

The focus on 'reality' has usually revolved on that which is difficult to change because of the many obstacles we tend to encounter. We find many still operating within the old paradigm and energies of lack and fear, and trying to stick to past formulas: these are often seen by those pushing for change to new paradigms as one of the many stumbling blocks for a better future. While that may be true, how many of us have tried reaching out, without indulging in the excitation of anger and hate to bring people around to re-channeling and *harmonizing* our collective energies?

Perhaps we should re-cast the way the term being 'realistic' means. Let us take this principle as an acknowledgment that we are responsible for our realities, and that a collective reality can be co-created through energetic re-channeling and operating at the higher spectrum of our frequencies. The 'reality' of things should no longer be why it is difficult to do things, as that has been the norm. It should be regarded as that which we can forge together, that is, the possibilities opening up for the creation of quantum realities that can be better than what we have presently.

And here the all important question comes up: would we not, indeed, do this if we had time and money enough to luxuriate in quantum thinking. To this we can only respond: do you still not see with all that is taking place, that Capital is the weapon that has been used to keep people and their morale down, subservient, in constant cycles of disrupted employment, constantly working away as economic slaves and always engaged in some form of conflict or state of tension?

Will this be believed only if a set of documents are released by another whistleblower?

## E. Conclusion: The economics of the unconscious

So where does this leave us? It is said that deep in the structure of the human brain, right at the core, is what is termed a reptilian aspect. To those who subscribe to the Darwinist narrative, perhaps they have a satisfactory *rational* explanation of this that snugly fits a 3D mindset of linearity. Yet it gets more interesting, for we learn that the reptilian part of the brain is a centre for not only survival instincts but probably helps most in generating: fear. How would a multidimensional approach to this work, in that what would we be like if there were no reptilian core in the brain?[10] Thus, if fear was needed then a reptilian brain implant would facilitate things. So do we primarily owe it to the reptilian brain core that we seem to have been evolutionarily *programmed* for fear; hypothetically, can we ever be de-programmed of fear?

However, given what we seem to be equipped with in our present evolutionary stage: are we, therefore, hardwired to never be able to rise above survival and fear? Then how do we account for the higher vibrational aspects of humanity? Why is it that we

can overcome fear and adversity and have ethical and spiritual inclinations as well? How to explain those of us who seem free of fear, or rather are able to overcome it, or hardly ever seem to operate at the lower frequencies of constant survival (even when not wallowing in wealth); in fact, if there is a Freudian death instinct or drive, then rather than rejoicing that death is inevitable why do people fear death? These are, of course, the eternal questions that we are not proposing to answer, but we should keep re-thinking them carefully. For if we do not have the answers, we must keep revisiting the questions and keep looking: is that not what the critical thinking capacity in us is for?

Ultimately, we are shaped in virtually all we do by the *economic* unconscious. In this we mean, being entangled without ever being aware at times by an energetic circuitry in the human mind of lack, bedeviled by survival instincts and, most of all, fear. We should have no problem accepting that these are indeed the lowest energetic patterns of humanity; for we still when the moment catches us prefer to praise, look up to and aspire toward the higher frequencies of ethical concerns, artistic achievement, sparing a thought about the welfare of our fellow citizens and the general well-being of all. However, if we are kept at lower vibrations through concerns of material needs, then we will be enmeshed at the level we have been at for a long time.

This is where money comes in, especially in its role as Capital: an instrument of power that is designed for sabotage and disruption. At the base of our concerns is how do we sustain ourselves to go on fighting another day? The Occupy movement certainly had issues over getting monetary support-resources to keep going and in furthering its aims via engaging local communities in greater ways. What limits many who could have taken active part in Occupy or other movements is the economic need for lucre to flow into their pockets. While trying to keep yourself and family afloat through a series of part-time jobs which may not even suit you or tap into your proper potential, you are trying to be an activist and have an impact on an entire system *created and maintained* through need and fear, or – the economic unconscious.

Many who may otherwise agree with the need for a new paradigm, or even the best of one's friends, or anyone who could take time away from their schedules to read and think through different ideas on why things are the way they are, are too busy trying to sustain themselves. Many have been conditioned and honed into believing that the only vision worth pursuing is the materialist's dream – the upper class bourgeois lifestyle for themselves and their progeny. But they do not realize that until this low frequency pattern of desire reflecting the economic unconscious is replaced by a higher frequency one, there is no future to speak of; what kind of stability and security is there in a world of poverty, lack and growing resentment? Is a state of perpetual domestic and international conflict what we are aiming for and how will that and a state of economic crises allow eventually even those who are better-off a situation where they can peaceably have their family around comforting them as they finally exit this world?

Even intellectuals or others who are willing to provide ideas and activism to push for change are held in check because of bread-and-butter concerns: employment worries, tenure anxieties, getting published, office-departmental politics and acquiring grants are ever present concerns – the economic unconscious is always there. Never underestimate it, for it shapes what intellectuals are willing to say and stand up for: they will do so just this side of comfort zones and self-interest; this does not make them any worse than anyone else for it is ultimately the economic unconscious that influences all.

At some stage, individually and collectively, we have to decide when enough is enough before things do get finally out of hand. Yet, angry uprisings are not the only responses we can give. The raising of the fist as a sign of resistance should come to also enact the attempt to raise our energetic frequencies to higher dimensions: for that is how we will leave behind the current gutted-through paradigm. Unless we try to operate on higher energetic levels we will continue to be held hostage by the economic unconscious. These final lines from a book are relevant:

[T]hrough the millennia, that scream of horror, the single meaning of which nonetheless extends up until today, telling us that the universe below the earth, the locus of death, below the World is a colossal overfilled space, that the place where we shall end most certainly does exist, that the World, life, and people will all come to an end, and it is there they will end, below, this time there below...but that up there above, the same fate awaits us, it awaits us who now reflect upon...the horror, which is not just the residue of some cheap fear: for there is a domain, that of death, the dreadful weight of the earth pressing in from all sides which has entombed them, and which in time shall devour us as well, to close it in upon itself, to bury, to consume even our memories, beyond all that is eternal.[1]

That completes our descent into the polarity of darkness: we can now emerge back up and walk into the light.

#### End notes:

[1] A clarification for those who have followed some of the ideas from "Revolutionary constructivism" to the current essay: the idea of heteronomy and autonomy in the Kantian system of moral constructivism is quite different from the heterogeneity of Bataille. Overlapping terminology between various thinkers can be potentially misleading at times. Bataille's idea of the heterogeneous is an opening into the non-rational and meant to facilitate avoidance of the conformity of homogeneity (as promoted by excessive rationality in intellectual discourse). As he insists, the homogeneous taken to its logical extreme can encourage the fascistic.

[2] The references to NP being generically scientific etc. can be found throughout Laruelle's *Anti-Badiou*. The other points made about Laruelle's ideas can be found throughout much of his writings on NP. It is to avoid unwieldiness that this essay will stay clear of citing lines from Laruelle, as we hope to look a little closer at the ideas of Bataille and Freud at present.

[3] The idea of excitation occurs regularly in Freud and is discussed in this essay, but Bataille uses it here to bring into relief the deadening conformity of homogeneity in philosophic thinking (perhaps an insistence on logical consistency) that is not in sync with the energies and possibilities of the universe. In fact, this quest for homogenous thinking is the bedrock for ER, servitude and unnatural linearity as a mode of life.

[4] p xlii, "Translator's preface" by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology*.

[5] In *Beyond the pleasure principle*, Freud also mentions that in taking into account "mental processes...we are introducing an 'economic' point of view" and that this is part of his 'metapsychological' framework (Freud *Pleasure* 3).

On a separate note, the references to 'a' and 'b' in some of the quotes from Freud reflect the double column format of the texts on each page as they appear in the book. So 'a' refers to the first column and 'b' to the second on the page. Thus, 'a-b' is a line that runs from the bottom of the first column into the second.

[6] Naturally, there are exceptions in the great spiritual teachers who appear from time to time, and who also practise what they preach; and those other individuals, who may be imperfect in ways most of us are, but who nonetheless stand up to injustice and tyranny and pay for that with their lives, metaphorically or literally.

[7] Freud regards the unconscious as "the deepest strata of our minds, made up of instinctual impulses" (Freud "War and death" 765a).

[8] Duality-polarity (generically cast as the contrast between 'light' and 'dark,' 'good' and 'evil') takes on a prominent role in *Beyond the pleasure principle* as Freud introduces the death instinct/drive as the opposite or polar end of life instincts (his italics): "Our views have from the very first been *dualistic*, and to-day they are even more dualistic than before – now that we describe the opposition as being...between life instincts and death instincts" (Freud *Pleasure* 63-64).

[9] The editor of this edition of *Civilization and its discontents* states in a footnote in reference to the last line of the essay – "But who can foresee with what success and with what result?" on page 112: "The final sentence was added in 1931 – when the menace of Hitler was already beginning to be apparent" (Freud *Civilization* 112, note 10).

Furthermore, in that final paragraph Freud's prescience shines through when he states that man has "gained control over the forces of nature" such that we have "no difficulty in exterminating one another to the last man:" considering that these were written before WWII and the advent of atomic weapons.

[10] The multidimensional approach is discussed a little further in "A theory of economic violence." Also, please see note [6] above.

[11] p 451, *Seiobo there below*, Laszlo Krasznahorkai.

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